The United States Marine Corps And The Operational Level Of War

A Monograph
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ABSTRACT

THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS AND THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL OF WAR by MAJ David G. Rathgeber, USMC, 49 pages.

The United States Marine Corps training and education programs for field grade officers focuses on the operational level of war. Since the nucleus of training is on the operational level of war, it follows that the Corps expects to require its field grade officers to perform missions at the operational level. If these officers are expected to perform at some other level, then the training which they receive is not an efficient use of manpower and money.

In this study, the missions which the Corps is most likely to face are discussed, and historical examples of each are analyzed to determine where, or if, Marine Corps field grade officers function at the operational level. This analysis points out a disconnect between the number of officers trained, and the number of officers required at the operational level of war. Recommendations are offered to correct the discrepancy, and to assist in making the best use of training hours and money.

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INTRODUCTION

With the end of the cold war, and the rush for the "peace dividend", military budgets in the United States are shrinking. The budget for the United States Department of the Navy is expected to shrink from 103 million dollars in 1991, to 82 million by the end of 1993. Of this, the budget slice which includes training is expected to drop by nearly 30%.[1]

This diminishing resource requires that the Corps ensure the best possible use of each scarce training dollar. To best guarantee that no dollar is wasted, Marine Corps schools must carefully consider what the future holds for the Corps, and make every endeavor to match curriculum to requirements. Further, once training is complete, Marines must be assigned to those billets which will make the best possible use of the education he or she has received.

One area in which many officers receive training is that of campaign planning and operational art. This training begins in earnest at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College (C&SC). The mission of the Command and Staff College is to provide intermediate and advanced intermediate professional military education to field grade officers of the Marine Corps to prepare them for command and staff duties with Marine Corps Air Ground Task Forces (MAGTF's), and for assignment with joint, combined, and high-level organizations.[2] This

10 month school averages 175 Marine Corps students per year, and the class usually includes 17 students from the sister services and international allies.

The foundation course for the entire curriculum is the Introduction to MAGTF Operations course.[3] The thrust of the course is the employment of the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) in a joint and combined operation. Students are required to show an understanding of the composition, capabilities and limitations of each element of the MAGTF. They must plan for the use of the ground and air combat elements of the MAGTF, as well as the combat service support element. The focal point of the course is on the operational level of warfare and the planning of operations.

Also a key component of the curriculum is the course Operational Level of War. In this course students focus on the analysis of strategic guidance and determine how to translate that guidance into military objectives. They further examine the concept of operational warfare at the theater level.[4]

All Marine Corps majors who are not selected to attend the resident course, or another service's resident course, are required to enroll in the non-resident course administered by the Marine Corps Institute in Washington, D.C.[5] The non-resident program closely follows the curriculum established at

the Command and Staff College in Quantico. It is designed to study the art of war, and serves to link the student's experience at the technical and tactical levels with the study of strategy and policy.[6] Its sub-courses focus on the operational level of war.

The final school in the Marine Corps school system which is designed to train field grade officers is the School of Advanced Warfighting (SAW). This school has about 15 Marine officer students who are selected from the Command and Staff College to stay on for another year of study. Its mission is: "to provide the Corps with officers who are specially educated in the capabilities, limitations, and requirements of U.S. military institutions and can apply that knowledge to improve the warfighting capabilities of the nation."[7] The school is specifically designed to further the study of operational art in the Marine Corps.

Since the Marine Corps has established training curriculums which focus training for all field grade officers on the operational level of war, the question must be asked: does the Marine Corps plan to fight at the operational level of war? Further, if the Corps does fight at the operational level, at what size headquarters should majors be expected to plan operational campaigns and how many of these trained planners does the Marine Corps need? If the Corps is not expected to consistently fight at the operational

level, should the Corps continue to train all of its majors to do so?

This study addresses these questions. An analysis of the expected roles and missions of the Marine Corps into the 21st century is also conducted. Historical examples of marines performing in battles which fit or approximate these missions will be provided to determine if they fit the category of operational warfare. Finally, a determination is made as to how often the Corps can expect to fight at the operational level of war, and at what level of Marine Air Ground Task Force Headquarters this can be expected to occur. This determination will show how many officers need to be trained in the operational art, and will thus lead to conclusions and recommendations regarding the current training program and its fit to the needs of the Corps. However, before attempting to analyze the Corp's contribution to the operational level of war, a working definition must be given to provide the criteria for analysis.

DEFINITIONS

Operational art, as considered today, is a relatively new phenomenon. There is a school of thought which believes that the operational level of war began with the Napoleonic Wars.[8] Another feels just as strongly that it has its origins in the

American Civil War.[9] Each of these schools defines the operational level of warfare on different terms. To decide whether the Marine Corps utilizes the operational level of war, an agreed upon definition must be provided.

Fortunately, the Corps has provided a definition from which to work.

> "The Operational Level of War is the level of war at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to accomplish strategic objectives within theaters or areas of operations. Activities at this level link tactics and strategy by establishing operational objectives needed to accomplish the strategic objectives, sequencing events to achieve the operational objectives, initiating actions, and applying resources to bring about and sustain these events. These activities imply a broader dimension of time of space than do tactics; they ensure the logistic and administrative support of tactical forces, and provide the means by which tactical successes are exploited to achieve strategic objectives."[10]

This definition is further amplified in Fleet Marine Force Manual 1, Warfighting:

> "The operational level of war links the strategic and tactical levels. It is the use of tactical results to attain strategic objectives. It includes deciding when, where, and under what conditions to engage the enemy in battle-and when, where, and under what conditions to refuse battle- with reference to higher aims. It is the art of winning campaigns. Its means are tactical results, and its end is the military strategic objective."[11]

In order to make use of these definitions, they must be broken down into usable criteria which can be compared to the roles and missions which the Marine Corps expects to face in the future. One way of doing this is to examine the two main schools of thought regarding the birth of operational art, as well as the information given in the manuals themselves.

The first school, which states that the operational level of war began with Napoleon, believes that the growth of operational warfare was intellectually driven. It is believed that operational art uses strategic aims to determine operational goals. It requires a durable formation (the Corps in the time of Napoleon) and utilizes distributed maneuver. It envisions forces with basic symmetry requiring the use of decentralized command and control in order to achieve success. Full mobilization of the nation is required as victory cannot be achieved in a single great battle, but rather victory is the culmination of many successful engagements.[12]

Those who believe that the operational level of war began with the American Civil War feel that technology drove its development. They therefore use slightly different criteria in determining its existence. They have eight points which they feel must be present to find operational warfare.

Weapons technology must have reached a stage where their lethality causes battles of "sufficient extension and duration to induce inter-battlefield maneuver."[13] Logistics must be nearly continuous to provide formations with the ability and endurance to conduct distributed operations. Formations must have the operational durability and the signals technology to enable them to perform distributed operations. A nation at war must have the depth of capacity to wage war throughout the "strategic depths of the enemy," and it must have a system of continuous mobilization. There must also be a symmetry between the opposing forces. Finally, there must be a leader with the vision to view all actions in a theater of operations as a whole throughout space and time.[14]

In "Campaigning", Marine Corps doctrine states that operations link the strategic level with the tactical level. The operational level of war implies that the commander must have the latitude to devise and execute the plan. Also, the plan must be executed by the man who conceived it. If not, he is "merely the tactical executant."[15] Finally, the manual quotes John Meehan in saying, "Regardless of size, if military force is being used to achieve a strategic objective, then it is being employed at the operational level."[16]

Should all of these ideas be the criteria upon which the Marine Corps' participation in the

operational level of war is based? The idea that a force is being employed at the operational level whenever it is used to achieve a strategic objective is not applicable to determining if the force is performing the operational level of war, nor if its officers are practising operational art. Since fighting separate tactical battles is a part of any campaign, the unit which is achieving a strategic objective may be engaging in the culminating tactical battle of a campaign or operation.

Likewise, the question of the lethality of weapons causing distributed maneuver is not applicable to this discussion. The lethality of weapons issue is one used in determining the birth of operational art. Regardless of the validity of the issue, the fact is that operational art exists today, and the lethality of weapons has surpassed those of both the Napoleonic and the Civil War era.

As for the matter of mobilization, the mere fact of mobilizing a nation implies that the nation may not be prepared to go to war. The very nature of the Navy and Marine Corps team is one of preparedness to go at any time. Also, whether or not the political decision to mobilize is made does not impact upon the possibility that the Marine Corps mission might include the operational level of war. Therefore, the

requirement for mobilization does not seem to be germane to this discussion.

Therefore, the criteria which will be used to determine the Corps' participation in the operational level of war are as follows. First, the man (or woman) who devises the plan should be the one who carries it out. The campaign must use a series of tactical, distributed battles linked together to achieve a strategic aim. The formations used must be durable enough to fight the campaign, and have logistical and command and control supporting infrastructures that are at least as durable as the formations. The last criteria is that the force be able to fight throughout the strategic depth of the battle area.

Before analyzing the Marine Corps' roles and missions, it is important to have an understanding of the definitions of tactics and grand tactics. Tactics is defined as the art and science of winning engagements and battles.[17] It includes the use of firepower and maneuver and integrates different arms. It also includes the immediate exploitation of success to defeat the enemy.[18] Further, activities at the tactical level focus on the ordered arrangement and maneuver of combat units in relation to each other and to the enemy to achieve combat objectives.[19] Finally, it is the "act of making them act at the decisive moment and at the decisive point of the battle."[20]

Grand Tactics has been described as posting troops on the battlefield based upon the characteristics of the ground. It consists of bringing them into action and fighting them upon the ground vice wargaming them on a map.[21] Grand tactics also consists of forming good combinations preliminary to battles as well as during their progress.[22] This portion of the description of grand tactics is significant as it implies that grand tactics deals with the use of combined arms, vice tactics which can be combat arm exclusive. Now that definitions of tactics, grand tactics, and the operational level of war have been given, it is possible to look at the missions which the Marine Corps expects to face to determine which definition they best fit.

This will be accomplished by examining the missions which the Marine Corps is most likely to face. These missions are: amphibious operations, peace-keeping, and joint operations. Each mission will be amplified by one or more historical case studies to determine if the mission requires the Marine Corps to perform at the operational level of war.

MARINE CORPS MISSIONS

AMPHIBIOUS OPERATIONS

First and foremost, the Marine Corps is organized, designed and equipped for the prosecution of amphibious

warfare. This is an outgrowth of the first and last functions given to the Corps. The Corps is to organize, train, and equip to provide Fleet Marine Forces of combined arms, together with supporting air components, for service with the fleet in the seizure or defense of advanced naval bases and for the conduct of such land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign.

Further, Marine's are to develop landing force doctrines, tactics, techniques, and equipment that are of common interest to the Army and Marine Corps.[23] The Corps is designed to provide power from the sea, and is structured to build that power through a full range of action including major offensive operations.[24]

Amphibious warfare, as understood in today's Marine Corps, began during World War II. In fact, it grew and matured as the war progressed and most of the lessons learned then are the basis for doctrine today. Two battles from World War II will be analyzed to determine if amphibious assault missions which the Corps expects to receive meet the criteria for the operational level of war. The battles are Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima.

GUADALCANAL

In the summer of 1942, it became known to the allies that the Japanese were preparing and constructing a large airfield near Lunga Point on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands.[25] It was determined that the proximity of that airfield to Australia and the shipping lanes which were being utilized as allied lines of communication made the establishment of an enemy airfield on Guadalcanal unacceptable. On the 21st of June, the decision was made to land and wrest the area away from the Japanese.[26]

Overall responsibility for the operation was vested in Vice Admiral Richard L. Ghormley, commanding the South Pacific Area. He, in turn, gave tactical control of the operation to Vice Admiral Frank J. Fletcher, Expeditionary Force Commander (Task Force 61). Major General Alexander A. Vandergrift, commanding general of the 1st Marine Division, was designated as the landing force commander.[27] MajGen Vandergrift argued for and won the point that the landing force commander should take responsibility for the action once the force is ashore.[28]

The landing was initially scheduled for 1 August, but at MajGen Vandergrift's request it was postponed until the 7th.[29] The plans for the landing called for

two infantry regiments to land, one on either side of the Lunga River. Their mission was to proceed from the beachhead and seize the airfield. A third regiment was also to land at the Lunga River and bring with it most of the division's supporting units. Its mission was to be prepared to exploit the beachhead.

Twenty miles across Sealark Channel lie the small islands of Tulagi and Gavutu. Three battalions, reinforced, were designated to land and take those islands. Finally, one company of Marines would do a reconnaissance mission on Florida Island, very near to Tulagi.[30]

Air support for the campaign, which was critical since the Marines were forced to leave their heavy artillery behind due to shipping constraints[31], was to be provided by Naval Aircraft flying from four aircraft carriers under Rear Admiral Kelly Turner, and Rear Admiral Noyes. This air support could only be for limited duration since the carriers were considered too valuable to be left in shallow waters, prey to the Japanese Navy and Air Force.[32] Once the airfield was secure, Marine aircraft came into the area and flew out of Guadalcanal from what was to be known as Henderson Field

This inability to remain on the part of the carriers had a tremendous impact upon the landing force operations. Once the carriers with their air support

aircraft left the area, logistic and troop carrying ships also had to leave. This left the forces on the ground with only 17 days of rations and four days of ammunition. The ships also took with them the 2d Marine Regiment headquarters element, which did not return for nearly 3 weeks.[33]

On Guadalcanal, H-Hour was slated for 0910 on the morning of August 7th. After beach preparation fires conducted by the Naval guns and aircraft, the first assault wave hit the beach on time and met no enemy resistance. They were able to establish a perimeter approximately 600 yards inland, and established a hasty defensive line there.[34] By the end of the first day, the Marines had managed to move a mile inland from the beachhead.

Logistics quickly became a nightmare for the landing force. Concerned that there wasn't much time available to unload the ships, the Marines worked feverishly to get as many supplies ashore as possible. Also concerned that Japanese resistance to the landing would be fierce, the Marines only assigned 500 men to handle the off-loading and storage of all the supplies. The large and uncoordinated stockpile of supplies which clogged the beach became a lucrative target for Japanese aircraft which later came into the area.[35]

By nightfall on the second day of the operation, the Marines had reached the airfield. Keeping the

airfield open became a matter of huge import for the landing force, as with the loss of the ships resupply through the air became a requirement. Although the landing and subsequent operations toward the airfield had gone mostly unopposed, the Japanese were not about to give up the island without a fight.

When the American flotilla left, on August 8th, the way was open for the Japanese to mount counter-attacks and bring reinforcements to their forces on the ground. On August 9th, air attacks by the Japanese increased. A battle, which a Marine long-range patrol fought on the 19th, yielded information that the enemy had already begun to land reinforcements on the island. The 12th of September saw the beginning of the battle of "Edson's Ridge" which was some of the bloodiest and hardest fought fighting of the campaign.[36]

On Tulagi, the battle unfolded quite differently. The Japanese on the island were special naval landing force sailors who met the Marines at the beach and struggled with them for the entire island. Throughout the first night of the battle, the Japanese defenders made four separate counter-attacks in an attempt to dislodge the Marines. At dawn on the second day, 8 August, reinforcements arrived for the Marines, and by late afternoon the battle for Tulagi was over.[37] This proved fortunate as later in the fight Marines were brought from Tulagi over to Guadalcanal island as

reinforcements and took part in the battle of Edson's ridge.[38]

The battle for Guadalcanal then settled down into a series of attacks and counterattacks which didn't end until the Japanese finally evacuated the island on the 7th and 8th of February.[39]

Guadalcanal was a tremendous battle, but did the Marines perform at the operational level of war? Certainly the battle was fought for a strategic objective, the airfield. The 1st Marine Division was operationally durable, and was able to fight, utilizing organic air and long range patrolling, throughout the depth of the battlefield. The command and control infrastructure proved sufficient for all commanders to control the battlefield, as is evident by MajGen Vandergrift moving units from Tulagi to Guadalcanal for reinforcement.

The logistical infrastructure, as established, was as durable as the fighting unit, however there were problems caused by Admiral Fletcher's decision to leave the area. Regardless of this fact, the Marines were able to find ways to ensure that they were never forced to avoid the battle or to give up due to a lack of logistical support.

Although there were separate battles fought at Guadalcanal and Tulagi, they were not distributed battles in the sense that they were operationally

separated in time or distance such that they were distinct battles. This is evidenced by the forces from one battle being shifted as reserves to another, and that only one reserve unit was designated on D-day to support either battle as needed.

Finally, the criteria that the man who devises the plan should be the one to carry it out was not met. In this case, tactical control of the operation was vested in Admiral Fletcher, while Gen Vandergrift was given command of the ground portion of the campaign. Therefore, the individual responsible for the amphibious portion of the operation was Admiral Fletcher, while responsibility once the unit was fully ashore went to Gen Vandergrift.

Although the amphibious and ground battles of Guadalcanal meet the criteria for being used at the operational level, the fact that there were no distributed battles and that the command structure did not vest the responsibility for planning and execution in one individual means it cannot be said that the Marines performed at the operational level. It also is not correct to think that the officers at Guadalcanal were required to perform operational art.

Guadalcanal represents one of the first attempts the Marine Corps made at modern amphibious warfare during World War II. An analysis of one of the last will be helpful in determining if much changed to bring

amphibious warfare closer to the realm of operational art.

IWO JIMA

The battle for Iwo Jima has been called the classical amphibious operation of recorded history.[40] By early 1945, the tide of the war had definitely turned against the Japanese. The Japanese navy had been rendered nearly ineffective away from its home ports, its air power had been crushed. Worse still, it had been cut off from the oil in Southeast Asia. There would be no hope of reinforcements for those Japanese soldiers who were out on the front lines, including Iwo Jima.[41]

Iwo Jima is a small island, roughly 7.5 square miles. It is shaped much like a pork chop, with the narrow end to the south. This southern tip is dominated by Mt. Surabachi which rises almost 600 feet above 3 miles of soft beaches. Moving north, the terrain raises to the Montoyama Plateau. On the plateau were two airfields which the Japanese had built.[42] It was these airfields which gave the little island its strategic importance.

The Army Air Forces B-29 Superfortress aircraft had begun an intense bombing campaign against the Japanese home islands. These bombing runs were a

dangerous and tiring round trip of three thousand miles. Losses were so severe that General Curtis E. LeMay, commander of the 20th Air Force, said that they could not continue the campaign unless their rate of attrition was diminished.

The reason was the island of Iwo Jima. It is located half-way between Japan and the Marianas and is on the only direct flight path the bombers had to their targets. Thus, utilizing radar and interceptors from the island, combined with the early warning given to the home defense anti-aircraft units, Iwo was responsible for most of the losses.[43]

Taking Iwo would not only stem the losses being incurred by the Air Forces, but would provide a forward staging area from which friendly fighter escorts could fly with the bombers. Further, the airfields could be used as an emergency landing site for any B-29's which were damaged during raids on the Japanese homeland. In early July of 1944, General Marshall ordered that the island must be taken by mid-January, 1945.[44]

The Japanese defense of the island would be different than anything that the Marines had seen before. Japanese forces were ordered not to open fire against enemy landing vessels. No opposition to U.S. troops would be made at the beaches. After the Marines had penetrated 500 yards, automatic weapons which were placed near the airfield would open fire, supported by

artillery in Suribachi and on the Montoyama plateau. The main Japanese defense would be made from the underground installations in the north, and no attrition would be attempted at Chidori. The Banzai charges which had cost so many casualties at earlier battles were not to be repeated on Iwo.[45]

Admiral Nimitz headquarters saw the plan for Iwo in several phases. The Navy would cut off the Japanese sea and air forces, transport the troops, and put them ashore; the Marines would take the island, the Army would garrison it, and the Air Force would use it.[46]

The chain of command for the operation was strikingly similar to that at Guadalcanal. Admiral Spruance had overall command. Vice Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner was given tactical command of the operation and was designated as the Joint Expeditionary Force Commander. Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith, was designated the Commanding General, Expeditionary Troops, and Major General Harry Schmidt, was the Commander of the Landing Force. General Schmidt was given responsibility for the ground portion of the battle. Rear Admiral Harry Hill was commander of Task Force 53, the armada which would transport the Marines into the area. Rear Admiral W.H.P. Blandy commanded Task Force 52, which was responsible for the pre-invasion bombardment of the island.[47]

On February 16, the Navy began three days of fierce bombardment meant to soften up the defences of the island. The plan was for the Marines to land two divisions abreast, with a total of four regiments, on the southern end of the island. The marines were to take the airfields as fast as possible; take Suribachi, consolidate their forces and drive north over the plateau. Admiral Nimitz and his staff believed that the operation would take 14 days. However, by the time it was over, a full month's worth of fighting would occur, and for the first time Marine casualties would outnumber those of the Japanese defenders.[48]

Logistical support for the exercise was well planned. Every possible necessity was considered. Pencils, blood, toilet paper, matches, gasoline, bullets, wooden prepainted crosses, water, garbage cans, flares and even dog food was considered. The 5th Division carried over 100 million cigarettes and enough food to feed Columbus, Ohio for thirty days. Ships with logistical support for the operation began loading at Pearl Harbor as early as November, 1944.[49]

Unfortunately for the Navy beachmasters and other support personnel, the Japanese defenders had used the eight months before the assault to target all possible landing sites, and the piles of supplies became lucrative targets for the Japanese artillery gunners. Navy doctors and corpsmen suffered 738 dead and wounded

during the battle.[50] Despite the difficulties faced, the Marines were never short of critical supplies, food or water during the fight.

Iwo Jima was officially declared secured at 1800 on March 16th, although during April and May 1,600 more Japanese were killed on the island.[51] The battle was declared a strategic success despite the heavy losses incurred. On April 7th, for the first time, land based fighters accompanied the B-29's on a raid to Japan. On June 7th, 102 B-29's landed on Iwo Jima, and on July 24th, 186 came. By war's end, 2,400 B-29's with 27,000 crewmen had been forced to use the airfields at Iwo Jima.[52]

Did anything change in the conduct of amphibious warfare to bring it in line with the criteria for acting at the operational level of war between Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima? The strategic goals of each were very similar, capture of airfields for friendly use and to deny their use to the enemy. Operationally durable formations were used, Marine divisions. The command and control infrastructure was certainly viable for the Marines throughout the battle of Iwo Jima. Logistical support was at least as durable as the maneuver units on Iwo, in fact logistics were probably better on Iwo than they were on Guadalcanal.

Once again, however, there were no distributed battles at Iwo Jima. The two Marine divisions which

landed were in mutual support of each other, and shared a common boundary line. The division which was in reserve came ashore and joined in the fight.

The chain of command also did not have Marines, or a Marine, responsible for planning and executing the overall campaign. The pre-invasion bombing plans, and in point of fact the amphibious landing plan, was the responsibility of Navy officers. This relationship between the Commander of the Amphibious Task Force, a Navy officer, and the Commander of the Landing Force, a Marine officer, is still doctrinal today.

It does not appear likely that Marines performing amphibious warfare will be working at the operational level of war. There will most likely not be any distributed tactical battles linked to a strategic aim which the Marines are going to be given responsibility. Also the doctrinal command relationships between the Navy and the Marine Corps during an amphibious assault preclude any Marine from being both the planner and executer of the overall campaign.

If it is not likely that Marines will be performing at the operational level of war during amphibious operations, then perhaps they will be during some of the other missions which the Corps expects in the future. The mission of peacekeeping is perhaps the next most likely one which the Corps may face.

PEACEKEEPING

Peacekeeping operations are conducted with the consent of the belligerent parties. They are designed to maintain a negotiated truce and help promote conditions that support the diplomatic efforts to establish a long term peace in the areas of conflict.[53] These operations are not expected to be armed conflicts, and therefore should not have distributed tactical battles. Thus they cannot be considered to require performance at the operational level of war. However, the common usage of the term "peacekeeping" also often includes peace enforcement operations.

Peace enforcement is the application of armed force to compel compliance with international sanctions or resolutions. It's primary purpose is the maintenance or restoration of peace under conditions broadly defined by the international community.[54] The belligerents may or may not agree with the introduction of U.S. forces, so combat operations may be necessary. Peace enforcement operations are inherently more dangerous than strict peacekeeping operations, and they have more in common with traditional military operations.

If it is true that at least one belligerent does not want U.S. forces there, it must be accepted that

combat operations are likely to occur. Since Marines are likely to be involved in peace enforcement operations, it is appropriate to analyze Marine Corps operations in the Dominican Republic to determine if Marines performed at the operational level of war.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson was faced with a communist Cuba and the growing concern with the struggle in Viet Nam, both an outgrowth of the cold war. Additionally, unstable conditions in the Dominican Republic reached crisis proportions.

Under the leadership of General Trujillo, activities in the Dominican Republic were such that in 1960 the United States broke all diplomatic and economic ties with the Republic. In 1961, the dictator Trujillo was assassinated and replaced by another dictator, Balaguer. He found himself unable to control the chaos in the nation and was forced to resign later that same year. In 1962, the Dominican Republic held elections and Juan Bosch became the leader with a margin of victory of almost 2 to 1.[55]

Despite the high hopes with which the U.S. viewed his presidency, Bosch turned out to be incompetent and anti-American. In 1963, Bosch was overthrown by an archconservative group from the Dominican military. The coup leaders promised free elections, and

established a triumverate to rule the country. During 1964, Donald Reid Cabral rose to lead the Triumverate. Reid enjoyed the support of the U.S., but not of the majority of his people.[56]

It came as no suprise then, considering the history of Dominican politics, that rumours of a coup attempt began to abound. These rumours became fact in April of 1965. Despite the tense atmosphere, the attempt came as a surprise to the U.S., and rebel army units helped establish a provisional government under Jose Molina, a man who was considered a communist. The activities of the rebel army led President Reid to ask for American assistance.

The initial determination was that Marines would be used to "protect U.S. citizens, and possibly for other purposes."[57] With this stated objective the first group of 500 Marines went ashore. They established a landing zone in a polo field, to help evacuate any Americans, and helped secure the Embassy.

As events unfolded, the countryside became more unstable, and Ambassador Bennet gave the order to prepare to land the remaining 1500 Marines of the 6th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU). Vice Admiral Kleber Masterson was given responsibility for the conduct of all American military operations in the Republic.[58]

The initial mission given to the Marines quickly changed and they were given the mission to establish an

International Security Zone (ISZ) as a prelude to using force to prevent a communist takeover of the country. The establishment of the ISZ was considered an act of agression by the rebels and met stiff armed resistance.[59] Thus the actions in the Dominican Republic meet the definition of peace enforcement.

As the operation grew in scope, units from the Army's 82nd Airborne arrived, and LtGen Bruce Palmer, U.S. Army, was flown in to take over as commander of the U.S. forces in the Dominican Republic. On 3 May, using seperate operations by both Army and Marine units, U.S. forces were able to surround almost 80% of the rebel forces and effectively end the threat of a communist takeover.[60]

Did the Marine's efforts in the Dominican Republic meet the criteria for the operational level of war? The strategic goal was not clear, but it was stated. It was initially to protect American lives, but was later revised to prevent a communist takeover of the Republic. These goals were met.

The 6th Marine Expeditionary Unit proved to be durable enough for the requirements of the campaign, and their logistics were more than sufficient. The command and control infrastructure was more than addquate to support operations throughout the depth of the Marine's area of responsibility.

There were distributed battles, but they were distributed between Army and Marine units. The Marines themselves did not have to conduct any distributed tactical battles to secure their strategic objectives. Responsibilities for choosing where and when the Marines would be employed went from Ambassador Bennet, to Vice Admiral Masterson, and finally to LtGen Palmer. There was never a time when Marines were responsible for planning and executing operational maneuvers. Once again, Marines were used for operational purposes, but they were not performing at the operational level of war.

It does not appear likely that Marines will be required to perform at the operational level of war in either amphibious operations or peace enforcement operations. Marines do have a requirement to participate in joint operations. In fact, since 1965 the predominant method of employment of Marines has been in the joint arena. It is this area which should next be analyzed to determine if Marines can expect to perform at the operational level of war.

JOINT OPERATIONS

The changing nature of the threat, combined with the fiscal realities of the day, have led to major reductions in the size of the nation's armed forces. This reduction necessitated a full review of the roles

and missions of the armed forces, with an eye to reducing unnecessary redundancies.[61] The changing missions and force structures have caused a shift in national security strategy from a global focus to regional deterrence.

Part of that shift has been to station more U.S. forces in the continental United States, and to rely on forward presence and crisis response to meet military requirements. This strategy will require a greater reliance on joint operations than ever before. The Marine Corps provides unique capabilities which are well tailored to the new joint security strategy.[62]

The most recent example of how this strategy is to be implemented, and the Marine Corps' role in it, was Operation Desert Shield/Storm.

DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM

On August 2, 1990, the forces of the Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein, rolled across their border into the neighboring sheikdom of Kuwait. There had been many warnings of the impending assault. In July, Saddam had delivered an important speech in which he blamed Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates with thrusting a "poisoned dagger" into the backs of other Arab nations by exceeding their oil production quotas.[63] Despite the threat, most nations were caught

by surprise by the quick, vicious and successful incursions by the Iraqi army.

In the United States, President Bush decided that such agression could not be allowed to stand. Any military response would be under the command of the United States Central Command (CENTCOM), which was commanded by Gen Norman H. Schwarzkopf.

Gen Schwarzkopf devised a plan that would use two Army Corps, a Marine Expeditionary Force (consisting of two Marine Divisions), an Air Force component, and Naval Forces.[64] The Air Force was to reduce the Iraqi army's capabilities by 50% before the ground campaign would begin. The Army's heavy corps (the VII) was the main effort, with the Republican Guard units of the Iraqi Army its target. The XVIII Airborne Corps had the responsibility for the left flank of the main effort, and they had the mission of interdicting highway 8 to prevent enemy reinforcements from coming into the area.[65]

On the extreme right flank of the allied forces was the Joint Arab Forces-E (JAF-E). Their mission was to attack straight up the road and take Kuwait City. To the west of JAF-E was the MEF, now designated as Marine Forces Central Command (MARCENT), under the command of LtGen Walter Boomer. The MEF had the 1st and 2nd Marine Divisions, and the 2nd and 3rd Marine

Air Wings. They were further reinforced by the Tiger Brigade, a U.S. Army heavy unit.

The mission given to the Marines was to attack from the southwest to the northeast to secure the airport and the approaches to the city. This was a supporting attack to fix the enemy, allowing the now famous "left hook" to procede with flank security. Also, in order to keep 11 Iraqi divisions tied up along the coast, the Marines left a brigade afloat to conduct amphibious demonstrations.[66]

On the 24th of February, the ground offensive began. The Marines 1st Division attacked at a point defended by the Iraqi 29th Division. This Iraqi division was at less than half its strength due to the air campaign. The attack commenced at 0400, and by 1200 the entire 1st division was through the first line of minefields. They met little resistance at first, but when enemy artillery began to fire on them, Marine F/A-18's and AV-8B's were quickly able to silence the enemy guns. Just after noon, the Marines were beginning to breach the second minefield layer. By dusk, the 1st Division had reached its first day objective, the Burgan oil field, and was preparing to take the airfield at Al-Jaber the next day.[67]

The 2d Marine Division had a tough fight from the beginning. They were hit by what may have been the most significant artillery barrage the enemy unleashed

during any part of the war. Damage assessments done after the war indicated that the artillery units firing on the Marines had been reduced only 10% by the air campaign. However, by the end of the day the Iraqi guns fell silent, and the Army's Tiger Brigade passed through the lines and began maneuvering against the town of Jalibah.[68]

On the second day of the campaign, the Marines of the 1st Division took the airfield from an Iraqi brigade which was defending it. They also seized the oil field from an enemy division. The Iraqi's attempted a counterattack, but it was soundly defeated by the Marines. By 1930, all of the days objectives had been taken and the men began preparing for the next days objective, Kuwait City.[69]

The 2d Division also achieved all of its objectives on the 25th, and occupied a blocking position south of the main road intersection west of Kuwait City. It was on the 25th that the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) conducted an amphibious demonstration at As Shuaybah. The purpose of this feint was to make the Iraqis think that the main effort would come across the beach.[70]

On the 26th, Saddam Hussein realized that the fight was lost. The units which had been assigned to guard the beach were all but destroyed. The 1st Marine Division completed the expulsion of those units from

their positions, while the 2d Division (with the help of the Tiger Brigade) sealed off any escape routes along the coast. At this point Saddam ordered his units to escape to the north. The Marines took up a blocking position to the south, and the escaping units were easy prey for allied air forces who turned the highway into a death trap for the Iraqi's.[71]

On the 27th the Marines surrounded Kuwait City and assisted the passage of the JAF-E forces into the city to "liberate" it. At 0800 on the 28th, approximately 100 hours after the ground war was started, President Bush issued a cease-fire that effectively ended the ground campaign[72]

As impressive as the air and ground campaigns were, they were matched by the amazing feat of logistics displayed by all the services. Through the length of the campaign, logisticians moved the equivalent of the city of Atlanta a distance of more than 8,000 miles to Saudi Arabia. This included the loading and unloading of 500 ships and 9,000 aircraft. More than 1800 Army aircraft, 12,400 tracked vehicles, 1,800,000 tons of cargo and 350,000 tons of ammunition were brought in. There were also more than 350,000 troops entering the theater.[73] The logistics were so well established that neither the air nor the ground units ever came near to reaching the end of their logistics pipeline.

The Marines fought well and they fought hard, as did all of the services, but did they perform at the operational level of war? The Marines did perform distributed battles. They were involved in the air war prior to the initiation of ground action, and they performed amphibious demonstrations in conjunction with ground maneuvers linked towards strategic objectives. General Boomer was responsible for all Marine forces in theater, and planned and executed all operations. Logistics were a strong point during Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and the Marine Central Command was durable enough for the operation.

However, the objectives which the Marines were given, and which they obtained were not strategic objectives. The strategic objective was the removal of Iraqi forces from the Kuwaiti theater of operations. The Marines were given operational objectives by General Schwarzkopf at Central Command. Therefore, the Marine Corps Central Command forces were being utilized at the operational level of war, but they were not performing at the operational level. However, it is significant to note that General Schwarzkopf and his staff at Central Command were performing at the operational level of war.

Central Command was given the strategic objectives, and they translated them into operational objectives. They then assigned those objectives to

tactical units for execution, while Central Command ensured all tactical and operational missions were linked to the strategic aims.

The logistical infrastructure which Central Command built was more than sufficient for the entire operation. Central Command forces proved durable enough to fight throughout the depth of the theater, and units fought distributed battles. General Schwarzkopf was responsible for the planning and execution of the entire war, and thus all the criteria for the operational level of war were met.

It is here, on the Central Command staff, that Marines performed duties at the operational level of war. Indeed, a Marine has been, and is currently, the commanding general of Central Command. At any given time there are 20 to 25 Marine field grade officers serving as planners in unified commands.[74] These officers can expect to perform at the operational level of war, and should be trained in the operational art.

Further, it is possible that Marine Corps units in both the Atlantic and Pacific could be called upon to perform the functions of a headquarters for a joint task force (JTF). These JTF's could be called upon to perform operations such as desert storm, and thus the officers assigned to their planning staffs must also be trained in the operational level of war. The units which most likely could be called upon to perform these

tasks are the MEF's and the Marine Forces Pacific and Atlantic.

The MEF headquarters is a robust organization. In the operations office (G-3), there are officers assigned to future operations, current operations, plans, fires and aviation cells. All of these officers might be called upon to plan at the operational level of war should a JTF headquarters be built around the MEF. There are about 29 field grade officers in each MEF headquarters G-3.[75] Since there are three active duty MEF's, there are 87 officers who currently are assigned billets in the MEF which may require their expertise in the operational arts.

The headquarters element at the Marine Forces Atlantic and Pacific is not as large as the MEF command element. In the G-3 at the Marine Forces level there are only about 10 field grade officers assigned to billets which may require them to perform at the operational level of war.[76] Since there are two Marine Forces Headquarters, there are approximately 20 field grade officers who should expect to perform operational art at that level.

CONCLUSIONS

It appears unlikely that most Marine field grade officers will be called upon to perform at the

operational level of war. The exception is those officers assigned to the planning/operations staffs of the Marine Forces and MEF level, as well as those assigned to joint staffs.

There are approximately 130 field grade officers who fill these type billets. Considering an average annual turn over rate of nearly 25%, the Marine Corps has a requirement to train about 33 officers per year at the operational level of war.[77] There is no requirement to train all Marine Corps field grade officers in the operational art.

Historical evidence shows that the majority of Marine Corps field grade officers will be required to perform at the tactical, or combined arms grand tactical level. Therefore, the bulk of Marine Corps training programs geared towards field grade officers should provide education at the appropriate level.

The curriculum at Marine Corps Command and Staff College (MCC&SC) should be changed to focus upon the combined arms grand tactical level of war. The Marine Corps Institute Command and Staff College (non-resident course) should be changed to match the new curriculum at MCC&SC. This would ensure that the majority of field grade officers are receiving the training they will most likely need.

There are currently 15 officers attending the Marine Corps School of Advanced Warfighting, and two

attending the Army School of Advanced Military Studies. By increasing these numbers to 20 and four, respectively, the Marine Corps could fill 80% of the billets which may require officers trained in the operational art in about four years. This four year period could be used to revamp the curriculum at the Command and Staff College without adversely impacting operational units. It would also allow for an 80% fill of those operational billets which turn over each year, thus ensuring adequate numbers of officers to fill the needs of the Marine Corps.

These officers should be given a secondary Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) identifying them as operational planners, so that Headquarters Marine Corps can monitor their assignments and ensure they are being properly utilized. These officers can be assigned operational billets as majors, but they will then also be available as lieutenant colonels and colonels to ensure expertise at all levels.

The downsizing required by budget cuts may show an additional benefit of this new MOS and training plan for the Corps. Officers in MOS's which are shrinking and thus creating an overage, could be assigned the operational planner secondary MOS. After ensuring credibility in their primary MOS, they could be placed in operational level planning jobs. This would increase their value to the Corps, and allow more

flexibility in assignment for these officers without harming their career potential.

Focusing all training programs for field grade officers in the Marine Corps on the operational level of war does not fit the expected future needs of the Corps. Mission analysis and historical study show that only a small percentage of Marine Corps officers are required to perform at the operational level. Training must be geared towards the way officers are expected to fight, therefore, most of the training offered should be focused on the combined arms grand tactical level of war. Only the numbers of officers actually required at the operational level should receive operational level training. Changing the focus of the training to meet the needs of the Corps will save time and money, while ensuring officers are properly equipped to fulfill the duties expected of them.

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